

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation.

Media consolidation represents one of the knells of our suffering democracy. When fewer and fewer individuals are allowed to determine the nature of information disseminated to the public, the viewpoints presented tend to narrow and favor those who hold that control. Democracy relies on an informed public that receives its information from a variety of sources and positions. It also requires discourse to gain understanding and cooperation for the good of the nation. An essential ethical question is at stake here. For, at some point, we must determine which is more important, the survival of the ideals upon which this country was founded or increasing the profits of corporations. Propagandizing for political benefit does not serve the public interest and moves dangerously close to ideologies so many Americans fought and died to defeat in the last century. State-controlled media is being replaced with corporate-controlled media. However, the results persist - the promulgation of limited information that only benefits those who control that information.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. As Reed Hundt, former chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, succinctly expressed regarding this issue, the FCC has "passed laws and regulations to ensure that broadcast television stations provide reasonably accurate, balanced and fair coverage of major presidential and congressional candidates." If the FCC does not disallow Sinclair to run the documentary "Stolen Honor," they must be made to air either a documentary such as "Going Upriver" or "Uncovered: The Whole Truth About the Iraq War." Along with Mr. Hundt, I call upon the FCC to honor its "responsibility as a steward of fair elections."

Sinclair's actions demonstrate the need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them.